



Fact Sheet-July 2007

Hampton County Capacity Use Designation

The purpose of this fact sheet is to summarize South Carolina's law on Capacity Use Permitting, and the request to incorporate Hampton County in the process.

What is *Capacity Use Designation*?

Title 49 Chapter 5 of the South Carolina Code of Laws states ...groundwater resources of the state be put to *beneficial* use to the fullest extent to which they are capable, subject to reasonable regulation, in order to conserve and protect these resources, prevent waste and to provide and maintain conditions which are conducive to the *development* and *use* of water resources.

- ❑ Where large amounts groundwater pumping has caused or will cause a problem such as saltwater contamination or lowering water levels in nearby wells, a **Capacity Use Area** may be designated by DHEC. There are currently four Capacity Use Areas in South Carolina, the Low Country (Beaufort, Colleton, Jasper counties), Trident (Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester counties), Waccamaw (Georgetown, Horry counties), and Pee Dee (Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, Marlboro, Williamsburg counties) areas of the state. The request to designate a Capacity Use Area can be initiated by a local government, DHEC, other government agencies, or groundwater withdrawers.

What is the purpose of *Capacity Use Designation*?

- ❑ Most importantly, the goal of the Capacity Use Program is not to prevent the use of or limit access to the groundwater resource, but to ensure that this important resource is available for everyone to use. Within a Capacity Use Area permits are required for pumping large quantities of groundwater. Permitting groundwater users allows DHEC to work with all users of the groundwater resource to manage pumping and minimize potential problems with local aquifers.

What are the requirements in a *Capacity Use Area*?

- ❑ Within a Capacity Use Area, the regulatory requirements apply to large groundwater pumping. Anyone pumping 3 million gallons or more in any month must be permitted by DHEC. Groundwater pumping is permitted based on reasonable use requirements and the need(s) of a particular activity or industry. Mandatory reporting of groundwater use ensures permit compliance and allows DHEC, local government agencies, and all interested stakeholders to determine historical use and establish goals for future planning decisions. DHEC routinely publishes water use data for the state.

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Will I have a voice in the permitting process?

- ❑ Yes, all interested parties and stakeholders will be invited for input in the development of local Groundwater Management Plans designed to meet the need of each Capacity Use Area. The local Groundwater Management Plan will help guide DHEC's permitting decisions, require water conservation by groundwater pumpers, and verify that only the amount of groundwater needed for a particular activity is used.

Why is Hampton County being considered?

- ❑ Reported groundwater pumping has dramatically increased in Hampton County from 3.98 million gallons per day (mgd) in 1980 to over 6.65 mgd in 2005 and the demand on the resource is expected to increase. Increased groundwater use has reduced groundwater levels in aquifers and caused problems with water wells. These problems may become more frequent and serious over time.
- ❑ Adding Hampton County in the Low Country Capacity Use Area will provide reasonable and consistent regulatory oversight and provide greater authority to prevent and minimize problems with the groundwater resource. In an area of South Carolina that depends on groundwater for drinking water and farm irrigation, protection of the resources is good for everyone.
- ❑ Regional regulation of groundwater withdrawals also is desired to protect the quality and quantity of the Floridan Aquifer, the most used aquifer in the south eastern coastal area of South Carolina.

If you have any questions about this fact sheet, please contact Mr. Rob Devlin with DHEC's Bureau of Water at (803) 898-3798 or Paul L. Bristol at (803) 898-3559.

Bureau of Water